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Art and Eiffel Towers

which took not less than seventy years, acted not differently on the crowd and on its habits of building.

"Let us hurry," wrote the most striking of all contemporary French poets, Guillaume Apollinaire, who died during the war, "Let us hurry to love the little train, with its blinking engine, running through the valley. If tomorrow it shall be ancient, everybody will be able to admire it." What strange power prohibits us from discovering an incontestable right to beauty among the creations of our time? Do we imagine this century to be as mediocre as often we are ourselves?

Fritz R. Vanderpyl

REVIEWS

CELESTIAL JAZZ

The Golden Whales of California and Other Rhymes in the American Language, by Vachel Lindsay. Macmillan Co.

The carpers mutter in their throats that Lindsay is finished, and then he answers with a book like this! A book dripping with dew and honey, and musical with bells—honey of Sangamon, of California, of Hymettus if you will; silver bells, golden bells, jazz bells, cow bells, church bells, all the bells that jingle and jangle and chime across our plains and lakes and mountains from Plymouth to San Diego!

The book speaks with more authority than most of us are aware, for it lifts history from fact to fiction, gives it a glamour. And from the days of Homer—nay, long before—until now, history has followed the glamour and poets have

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registered in men's hearts a truth deeper than events and statistics. It may well be that in such poems as *The Golden Whales* and *Bryan! Bryan!* Lindsay is even today writing the epic of our multicolored, swiftly marching race. The campaign of '96 is like to go down to posterity as he pictures it, in spite of all future efforts of level prosers to weigh and balance and set things straight. It is doubtful if "lean rat Platt," and "bull-dog Hanna," and

Mark Hanna's McKinley,
His slave, his echo, his suit of clothes,

will ever recover from the blow dealt them in this wildly marching, banner-waving poem of a sixteen-year-old youth grown up to virile strength and purpose. And in spite of thin-spread Chautauquas, and grape-juice dilutions, and any future meddling with his destiny, "Boy Bryan" may find his immortality as it is here decreed—thus and not otherwise.

Underneath the fervor and humor and jazzy music of this book is a thinking mind and a poet's vision. I would not say that any single poem in it is finer than *The Congo* or *The Chinese Nightingale* or *Booth*; yet the book as a whole gives an impression of growth and a suggestion of future height and depth and amplitude. It has an effect of covering the continent, and of lifting our national ragtime from the stamp of feet to the beat of wings. Its nonsense has a jewel of truth at the heart of it, and its deafening blare carries daringly a folk-tune motive. Again and again Lindsay takes up a vague intuition in the heart of the American people, and makes it articulate in a rollicking tune.

Celestial Jazz

Take, for example, his short poem on that darling old absurdity, *The Statue of Old Andrew Jackson*—the equestrian miracle balancing on its horse's hind legs in front of the White House. Does not this poem put the essential stamp of love and pride and loyal laughter on that early provincial America of the 1840's, and on that slam-bang democratic general who "sat straight up" and "held his course"?

He licked the British at Noo Orleans,
Beat them out of their elegant jeans.
He piled the cotton-bales twenty feet high,
And he snorted freedom; and it flashed from his eye. . . .
And now old Andrew Jackson fights
To set the sad big world to rights. . . .
His hobby-horse will gallop on
Till all the infernal Huns are gone.

Even so is the boastful flamboyance of *The Golden Whales* typical of California; and even so its fun is of the good old American kind—rough, but good-natured, even loving.

One might pause to remark on this poet's happy phrasing—a concise and trenchant vividness which seems to slip from his tongue before he is aware. There is no appeal from it: Bryan is a "deacon-desperado" for good and all; and forever "Daniel's tender sweetheart" is

Gliding and lovely as a ship on the sea.

We believe him and go along with him, whether he is laughing as in *The Blacksmith's Serenade*, or dreaming as in *The Lamé Boy and the Fairy*, or suppressing tears as in *A Kind of Scorn*, a poem of proud renunciation and immeasurable sadness:

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You do not know my pride
Or the storm of scorn I ride.

I am too proud to kiss and leave you
Without wonders
Spreading round you like flame.
I am too proud to leave you
Without love
Haunting your very name:
Until you bear the Grail
Above your head in splendor,
O child, dear and pale.

The Last Song of Lucifer is a more metaphysical expression of divine despair—the despair of the poet who would know and capture the whole, who would make himself God; and who wins angels and demons to his quest, singing “the song of the Sons of the Morning” in hell;

Till it leaped as a flame to the forests on high,
And the tears of the demons were fire in the sky.

And just for a breath he conquered and reigned,
For one quick pulse of time he stood,
By flame was crowned where God had stood
Himself the Word sublime.

Until he encounters *The Punishment*:

Beneath where the Gulfs of Silence end
Where never sighs nor songs descend;
Never a hell-flare in his eyes,
Alone, alone, afar he lies. . . .
And his memories of music
Are rare as desert rain.

There is sweetness and light in this book, and there is also suffering. Mr. Lindsay's songs are no longer songs of youth, but we need not fear that he will have no more to sing.
H. M.